

authoritarian conscience has to exist as a precondition for the formation of humanistic conscience."¹ But he regards this as an assumption which can not now be proved, since all people actually observed in our society have both consciences.²

All this is to say that the process of conscience development ought to lead directly to the humanistic conscience, but that it never actually does so without detour in our society because of the specific content of the culture, which in turn Fromm regards as changeable at the points where conscience can be affected. Fromm distinguishes between "existential" and "historical" dichotomies--the former being those aspects of man's existence which are unalterable, the latter those which are man-made and therefore changeable by man.³

In observing conscience development, therefore, what needs to be done is to see the difference between the basic process and the changes which occur in that process when distortions are introduced, fundamentally by authoritarian patterns of one kind or another. Both need to be understood, but the authoritarian distortions are not to be confused with normal conscience development in the human being. This means that Fromm considers most of the psychoanalytic discussions of conscience to be dealing with distortions of normal conscience development. Freud's Super-Ego, he says, "is only one form of conscience or, possibly, a preliminary stage in the development of conscience."⁴ He does not deal at all

¹ Ibid., p. 167.

² Ibid., p. 165.

³ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴ Ibid., p. 144.

with that type of conscience phenomena of childhood which greatly aggravates or exaggerates the attitudes or intentions of the rearing parents. He assumes that all such phenomena are responses and are therefore distortions of the conscience-producing process. This seems too cavalier a treatment of this important question. An exaggerated response may be a necessary protection of selfhood even under the most loving and benevolent parents.

We recall that Flugel found the origin of the moral sense grounded in fear but somehow combined with a sense of responsibility to produce guilt rather than merely fear feelings. In Fromm's authoritarian conscience, the good conscience indicates one has given up, submitted, lost his true self; and the bad conscience indicates that the forces of the true self are still trying to operate. What can be said of good and bad conscience if the conscience is humanistic? Of the bad or guilty conscience Fromm writes, "The most important symptom of the defeat in the fight for oneself is the guilty conscience."¹ That is, one who retains a guilty conscience is not really moving toward a humanistic conscience. Presumably the guilty humanistic conscience would immediately take action at points open to it and would then cease to be guilty. The good humanistic conscience would not be easy in the sense of unconcerned, but would be free to feel responsibility in a way which the authoritarian makes impossible. Responsibility would be "my response to a request which I feel to be my concern," not a "duty imposed upon one from the outside."² "It is the task

¹Ibid., p. 158.

²Ibid., p. 99.

of the ethical thinker to sustain and strengthen the voice of human conscience, to recognize what is good or what is bad for man, regardless of whether it is good or bad for society at a special period of its evolution."¹ If man had developed no semblance of a humanistic conscience, "the human race would have bogged down long ago in its hazardous course."² "The human race . . . has formulated ethical norms in its religious and philosophical systems toward which the conscience of every individual must be orientated."³ This is to say that the task of ethics is to choose among the aspects of cultural and historical influence those which develop conscience humanistically as against those which develop it in authoritarian distortions. It is not man against culture (though it may be man against dominant modes in any particular culture), but one aspect of culture against another. We decide; we cleave to the one and despise the other; we choose. Actually, Fromm believes, if we discount the distortions which particular historical and cultural situations imposed upon religious and philosophical views of ethics, "we find an amazing agreement among all thinkers whose aim was the growth and happiness of man."⁴ For "the common elements in these teachings are more important than their differences."⁵ The search for the content of the humanistic conscience is not difficult, therefore, in terms of grasping basic principles. But it is very difficult to keep this basically simple set of principles from distortion. The matter, then, would appear to be the task challenging the ethical thinker. Not more intricacy of system, but a clearer grasp of

¹Ibid., p. 244.²Ibid., p. 142.³Ibid., p. 172.⁴Ibid.⁵Ibid.

basic principles which will permit distinguishing distortions from the genuine in all concrete situations.

The Direction of Psychic Forces

We may turn now to the third of our categories of Fromm's thought, what I have called the direction of psychic forces.

Another term for this might be the nature of man's true interest and its relation to his interest in his fellow man. Fromm is concerned both with the intrapsychic and interpersonal relationship situations. Since both are considered in terms of the investment of interest, the "direction of psychic forces" would seem to be a fair general description of the area.

Fromm's basic thesis on this point is very clear. It is that "modern man lives according to the principles of self-denial and thinks in terms of self-interest."¹ Or "The failure of modern culture lies . . . in the deterioration of the meaning of self-interest."²

Modern society, in spite of all the emphasis it puts upon happiness, individuality, and self-interest, has taught man to feel that not his happiness (or if we were to use a theological term, his salvation) is the aim of life, but the fulfillment of his duty to work, or his success. . . . He acts under the illusion that his actions benefit his self-interest, though he actually serves everything else but the interests of his real self.³

This is one more implication arising from Fromm's conviction that the chief enemy is the authoritarian trends that have arisen in their peculiar and anonymous form in modern western culture. He has a specific historical explanation for the situation, which we

¹Ibid., p. 135.

²Ibid., p. 139.

³Ibid., p. 19.

will consider at more length later. But we may say at this point that it devolves upon what happened to create the Reformation teaching and what happened to it in the course of historical change. Asserting, for instance, that Calvinism taught the suppression of self-interest for the glory of God, Fromm writes:

"What happened was that man has accepted the contents of the Calvinistic doctrine while rejecting its religious formulation."¹

That is, western man accepted what Weber called the "innerweltliche Askese" but lost the religious reference for it. One accepted a stern attitude and tone in relation to living, but forgot what this was supposed to be for.

Self-interest and self-love are to be sharply distinguished from selfishness, preoccupation with advantage. "Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are actually opposites."²

. . . my own self, in principle, is as much an object of my love as another person. The affirmation of my own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in the presence of the basic readiness of and ability for such an affirmation. If an individual has this readiness, he has it also toward himself; if he can only "love" others, he cannot love at all.

These things have become more and more confused under the growth of the authoritarian situation. "While modern man seems to be characterized by utmost assertion of the self, actually his self has been weakened and reduced to a segment of the total self-- intellect and will power--to the exclusion of all other parts of the total personality."⁴ By "intellect" in this context Fromm

¹ Ibid., p. 135. Fromm's interpretation is plainly influenced by Max Weber.

² Ibid., p. 131.

³ Fromm, EFF, p. 115.

⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

clearly means what Tillich calls "technical reason," which loses sight of human objectives in preoccupation with its detached and objective methods. And "will" is intended to mean not the movement of the whole self, but the forced or compelled action on the basis of dictation by some aspect of the personality.

Even Freud was guilty of not distinguishing self-love from selfishness, writes Fromm, for he "rationalized" this "in scientific language in [his] theory of narcissism."¹ This tended to assume that all concern for the interests of the self was of the same order, which is what Fromm means by confusion. People tend to think that unselfishness is found only in those acts "which do not serve the individual but somebody or something outside himself."² That is, to prove the unselfishness of any act it is necessary to demonstrate to the ordinary person that the person acting received no benefit from it in any way or at any level. This same attitude implies that "it makes little sense to feel guilty for neglecting one's self."³ Any look at the self is of the same order, is the false belief which is held.

The tragedy of all this is that it not only neglects but denies that, in some sense, "man's aim is to be himself."⁴ If he is controlled by authoritarian trends, then it is frightening to try to be oneself in any basic sense, and one deludes himself that that he is being himself through mere activity. Most people never "know their true wants," and instead modern man "actually wants

¹Fromm, MFH, p. 128.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Ibid., p. 166.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

what he is supposed to want."¹ To know what one really wants is

"one of the most difficult problems any human being has to solve."²

We escape from this task, under authoritarian influence, and tend to accept "ready-made goals as though they were our own."³

All this is profoundly a moral problem.

Our moral problem is man's indifference to himself. It lies in the fact that we have lost the sense of the significance and uniqueness of the individual, that we have made ourselves into instruments for purposes outside ourselves, that we experience and treat ourselves as commodities, and that our own powers have become alienated from ourselves.⁴

In order to clarify what Fromm means by the basic distinction between following true self-interest, we may summarize a case study which he presents. For whatever may be our criticism of Fromm's theory of selfhood and the true and pseudo-selves, there are subtle differences here for which the language is not effective but which can be clarified by a case study.⁵

Fromm writes of a medical student of twenty-two, interested in his work and getting along fairly well with people. He had little zest for life, often felt tired, but did not consider himself especially unhappy. He came to psychoanalysis for professional reasons, to aid his preparation to become a psychiatrist. The one complaint he brought to the analysis was that he was having some difficulty in his medical studies, forgetting things he had read, getting tired during lectures, and not doing well in examinations. He said that he was clear that he wanted to study

¹Fromm, EFF, p. 252.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Fromm, MFH, p. 248.

⁵Fromm, EFF, pp. 202-205.

medicine but often doubted his ability to make the grade.

In the course of his analytic therapy, he once told of a dream in which he found himself on the top floor of a skyscraper which he had built. In the dream he looked out over other and smaller buildings with a slight feeling of triumph. But then the building collapsed, and he was under the ruins. He was then aware that some one was trying to dig him out. He heard some one say he was badly hurt but that the doctor would soon be there.

It seemed to take a long time in the dream before the physician arrived. When he did, he found he had forgotten his instruments and could do nothing to help. The student then found himself very angry with the doctor. At this point he found himself standing up in the dream, and realized he was unhurt.

In discussing the dream, the student recalled that as a child his favorite activity for a long time was playing with construction blocks, that he had always had an interest in architecture, and that at the age of seventeen he had considered becoming an architect. When he had mentioned this possibility to his father, father had replied in a friendly way that of course his son was free to choose his career but that for his part it seemed clear that this yen to become an architect was a hangover of childish wishes. The student assumed his father was right, had put the idea aside, and had undertaken medicine as a matter of course.

It occurred to him also that his analytic hour had been changed from its regular schedule. Although he had agreed readily enough to the change (for the convenience of the therapist), he

had really felt very angry about it. While discussing this, he became angry again, accused the analyst of being arbitrary, and said, "Well, after all, I cannot do what I want anyway." After he had said this he was surprised, for he had never consciously felt antagonistic to the therapist.

On a later occasion he had a dream in which his father was injured in an automobile accident. In the dream the student was a physician, and was supposed to look after his father. But while he tried to examine him, he felt paralyzed and could do nothing. He was terror-stricken and woke up. With some reluctance he mentioned that he had often had the thought that his father might die suddenly, and that such thoughts made him afraid. He had found himself beginning to think of what he would do with the money from his father's estate, but had suppressed such fantasies as soon as they began to emerge.

It occurred to him that there was at least one common element in both these dreams, that the doctor was not able to give help. This led him to acknowledge that his feeling that he could never be of any use as a doctor was deeper than he had previously realized. Going back over this material, he saw that he had had not just a feeling of impotence about being a doctor but also one of anger, and also a feeling of triumph when the physician was unable to help. As the analysis proceeded, he found he had a deep underlying feeling of anger against his father. It also became clear that his feeling of not being able to be a doctor was just one instance of a general feeling of weakness and powerlessness about his whole life.

Fromm concludes,

Although on the surface he thought that he had arranged his life according to his own plans, he can feel now that deeper down he was filled with a sense of resignation. He realizes that he was convinced that he could not do what he wanted but had to conform with what was expected of him. He sees more and more clearly that he had never really wanted to become a physician and that the things which had impressed him as a lack of ability were nothing but the expression of passive resistance. This case is a typical example of the repression of a person's real wishes and the adoption of expectations of others in a way that makes them appear to be his own wishes. We might say that the original wish is replaced by a pseudo wish.¹

Fromm uses this case, as we have, to show that what often appears to be the expression of one's own real wishes or of one's own self is actually imposed, and that the pseudo-self-situation is often so subtle, and has been brought about in such a delicate or sophisticated way, that its meaning becomes clear only in some intensive process like psychoanalysis. Actually, what Fromm clarifies through this case is the subtlety and delicacy of pseudo-wishes, actually imposed but not so realized. What he does not clarify, even for this case, is the nature of the true wish which the pseudo-wish has covered up.

Is the real wish to be understood as associated with the construction or architectural interest of earlier days? Probably Fromm would say that if this had been, at the time, a genuine interest, and had been pursued, the pursuit of it (i.e., the process of testing the genuineness of one's interest in it) would have been an expression of real wishes, of the real self--even though this might have led to the selection of something other than

¹Ibid., p. 205:

architecture as a profession, conceivably even medicine if it had been approached without the unconscious inner compulsion. If the interest were genuine, i.e., pursued without compulsion even of the secret kind, it would have led away from the general feeling of powerlessness, so that anything chosen (even medicine) would have had different kinds of feelings attached to it.

The above is on the assumption that the interest in architecture, or at least in building with blocks, was genuine. But suppose that this had been subtly encouraged by the father at an earlier age, in the same way that medicine was subtly recommended at the later age, for instance, the father encouraging building blocks and discouraging carpentry efforts; at a still earlier age having encouraged a chemistry set instead of Hopalong Cassidy equipment. All this is quite likely. In that event, we would have had a continuing process of substitution of pseudo-wishes for real wishes. In that case, we could say that every one of the interests had stronger pseudo-wish than real wish elements in them. But what then is the real wish?

It would appear to me that the sole way in which Fromm can escape the dilemma of this question is to confess that the "real wish" is an abstraction from the total process in which what occurs is the continuing discouragement of initiative in the exploration of the outer and inner worlds. In this process, the "real wish" is an abstract term for what might have emerged at any point in the process if this discouragement had not occurred, and also for the new feeling tone which arises into awareness at any point (in this case, during the analysis) when what has

actually occurred in the process has the wraps lifted from it. In attempting to make a sharp distinction, Fromm has used substantive language, apparently believing that a more persistent effort to define the situation in process terms would appear to weaken the sharp distinction between the two qualities of wish. Yet the whole logic of Fromm's perceptions calls for a minimizing of the substantive mode of thought. As we have seen, a similar tendency occurred in Fromm's thought on conscience and on types of character. And as we shall see, it recurs in all phases of his thought. This tendency to achieve clarity by sharp contrast is a point to which we shall devote attention in our critique of Fromm's thought, along with the fact that the logic of his position is to leave substantive thought-forms behind.

Yet the motive for reversion to substantive thought-forms appears to be strong in Fromm. He writes: "We are aware of the existence of a self, of a core in our personality which is unchangeable and which persists throughout our life in spite of varying circumstances and regardless of certain changes in opinions and feelings."¹ In what sense is the core "unchangeable" does that imply that its content is given in some sense which removes that content from the process of social interaction? That would hardly be consistent with Fromm's system. It would appear that what Fromm means is to distinguish the direction of process, and contenta. No content (like Kant's conscience content) is given; that is altogether a result of the process of

¹Fromm, MFH, p. 206.

acculturation. But the direction of the process, if not unduly impeded by the discouraging and repressive aspects of culture, is such that a "real self" and "real wishes" emerge--and direction and contents are in harmony. From what Fromm said about conscience, we can assume that he does not regard only pseudo wishes to be culturally conditioned but "true wishes" as well. Therefore, the statement that a self or a true wish is "unchangeable" is misleading if it remains unqualified. In line with Fromm's stated premises, a true self can be unchangeable only in a directional or qualitative sense. Fromm's need to make the sharp distinction between true and pseudo wish or self is apparently stronger at times than the force of his own logic.

Fromm at times uses Aristotelian modes of thought to support the true selfhood point. For instance,

Existence and the unfolding powers of an organism are one and the same. All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualize their specific potentialities. The aim of man's life, therefore, is to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature.¹

If this be understood merely as a statement against man's true end being something different from fulfillment in line with his nature, i.e., as a polemic against authoritarianism, its intent at least is clear. But if it be taken as a supposedly adequate statement of the nature of man's true end, or of man's nature, it simply begs the question. If man's true nature is being pursued when some particular kind of direction is being pursued (what I believe is the implied logic of Fromm's theory), then it is mis-

¹Ibid., pp. 19-20.

leading to speak of actualizing "specific potentialities" as if they were specific or given contents, more or less independent of the socially interactive process by which any selfhood, true or false, is brought into existence.

In his emphasis on the true self, the "unchangeability" of the "core of our personality," Fromm has kinship with Jung. In the implication that this core has specific contents, which seems to be the case in some statements, this is especially true. Freud had implied that the basic biological needs must find expression; Jung, that the basic psychic needs must do the same. Both had implied that there is a given content as well as a direction. Fromm's thought has transcended in its logic the substantiveness of both Freud and Jung, as well as the biologism of Freud. But he reverts to substantivism, against the logic of his own thought, in what is historically an Aristotelian form.

It is apparently another form of this same tendency which leads Fromm repeatedly to using the analogy of "outer" and "inner" to delineate the difference between pseudo wish and true wish, false self and true self.

As long as anyone believes that his ideal and purpose is outside him, that it is above the clouds, in the past or in the future, he will go outside himself and seek fulfillment where it can not be found. He will look for solutions and answers at every point except the one where they can be found--in himself.¹

In terms of a direction, the metaphor of inner and outer is meaningless, connoting identification with as against alienation.

¹Ibid., p. 249.

from, the at home against the alien. But if this is then confused with contents, we have spatial metaphor used in the same way as in the classical Freudian topography and with similar defects.

A similar point appears when Fromm defines education as being "identical with helping the child realize his potentialities," its opposite being "manipulation."¹ This too is valid if manipulation be understood as the diverting of a course of exploration, but not if it carries the implication that the presentation of any cultural content is ipso facto manipulative. In his therapeutic work, Fromm would not hesitate to offer an interpretation to a patient--if he felt the patient were free to refuse it if it were wrong or if he were not ready to accept it. Hence this would not be manipulative. It is the intent with regard to direction or quality, rather than content, which is what makes education manipulative or not.

Generalizing upon the process by which the direction leading toward true selfhood is achieved, or is diverted, Fromm uses an interesting Freudian symbol, reinterpreted. Insofar as man has been unable to experience himself and others as "free human beings," he is attached to incest--not in the form which limits it to sexual content and family relations, but in the symbolic form which confines one's attachments and loyalties to family, tribe, race, state, social class, when actually the true self (concreteness) and the whole human race (universality) are all involved in yearning to experience oneself and others as "free human beings."

¹Ibid., p. 207.

The development of mankind as a whole should move "from incest to freedom."¹ Although Fromm does not speak of the discovery of the concrete through the universal, and the universal through the concrete, his logic implies it.

A final point on the direction of psychic forces concerns Fromm's conception of the meaning of neurosis. It is often thought, he indicates, that neurotic people are those who "have failed in this task of self-emancipation," while the average "well-adjusted" person has succeeded. This is not true in our society. "On the contrary, the vast majority of people in our culture are well adjusted because they have given up the battle for independence sooner and more radically than the neurotic person."² Insofar as neurosis indicates that the person has not altogether given into the extinction of his true selfhood, it is to be understood as having a positive potential.

By the same token, "every neurosis represents a moral problem. The failure to achieve maturity and integration of the whole personality is a moral failure in the sense of humanistic ethics."³ So neurosis indicates temporary failure at least in moral growth; but insofar as it is an active neurosis, to which one has not altogether adjusted but which he recognizes as a problem, it is an indication that he has not given up the pursuit of a right direction for his psychic forces and interests.

¹Fromm, PAR, p. 81.

²Ibid., p. 83.

³Fromm, MFH, p. 224.

The Criteria of Moral Growth and Realization

The fourth of our categories for exploring Fromm's thoughts is the criteria of moral growth or moral realization. Fromm speaks of moral realization from several perspectives: true happiness and joy, true freedom, true integration, true selfhood, capacity for love, creative capacity--but most often from the point of view of productiveness. A key statement is: "Humanistic ethics may very well postulate happiness and joy as its chief virtues, but in doing so it does not demand the easiest but the most difficult task of man, the full development of his productiveness."¹ If man finds true happiness, he has found the answer to the problem of human existence which lies in "the productive realization of his potentialities."² This means "being one with the world and preserving the integrity of his self."³

Properly understood, happiness is a criterion of moral growth and realization because happiness or unhappiness are expressions of the state of the entire organism, of the total personality. Happiness is conjunctive with an increase in vitality, intensity of feeling and thinking, and productiveness."⁴ "If a person thinks he has happiness or pleasure but this exists only in a person's head" and not throughout his personality, he has only "pseudo-pleasure" or "pseudo-happiness."⁵ Psychoanalysis underlines the view that "the subjective experience of satisfaction

¹Ibid., p. 191.

²Ibid., p. 189.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 181.

⁵Ibid., p. 182.



is in itself deceptive and not a valid criterion of value."¹
Happiness has a subjective aspect, but it (is to be understood as
"the outcome of interactions with . . . objective conditions. . . ."²
The objective conditions "can be summarized comprehensively as
productiveness."³ Joy and happiness are to be understood as the
same in quality but with joy referring to a single act or expe-
rience while happiness refers to a continuing state.⁴ Joy is
event; happiness, a condition of character.

In this view, there would be a true pleasure coming out
of experiences of joy in a state of happiness, and a pseudo or
irrational pleasure which is the "indication of greed, of the
failure to solve the problem of human existence."⁵ Although there
is a subjective side to true happiness and pleasure, "pleasure can
not be a criterion of value," because many people take pleasure
in submission, in hate, or in exploitation.⁶ The real opposite
of true happiness and joy is "not grief or pain but depression,
which results from inner sterility and unproductiveness."⁷

If one has true happiness, he has freedom, "the necessary
condition of happiness as well as of virtue."⁸ This freedom is
freedom to realize that which one potentially is, to fulfill the
true nature of man according to the laws of his existence."⁹
Actually, we have been ". . . fascinated by the growth of freedom
from powers outside of ourselves and are blinded to the fact of

¹Ibid., p. 179.

²Ibid., p. 173.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 189.

⁵Ibid., p. 191.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Ibid., p. 190.

⁸Ibid., p. 247.

⁹Ibid.

inner restraints, compulsions, and fears, which tend to undermine the meaning of the victories freedom has won against its traditional enemies."¹ Freedom does not mean "the ability to make arbitrary choices" nor "freedom from necessity" (by which Fromm designates man's finiteness, his "existential limitations").² Freedom, Fromm believes, "characterizes human existence as such," but "its meaning changes according to the degree of man's awareness and conception of himself as an independent and separate being."³

Freedom is sometimes linked by Fromm to independence, and at other times to fulfillment. On the former, "To the degree to which the individual, figuratively speaking, has not yet completely severed the umbilical cord which fastens him to the outside world, he lacks freedom"⁴ Through this symbolic incest, this renunciation of independence, the individual tends to cling to security. But when "complete individuation" is reached, the person needs to find security in other ways, and freedom then has a new meaning. That is, no security then has positive meaning unless it is based on a freedom to proceed with actualization of the true self, within the conditions and limitations of human existence. If one can proceed in this way, he is free and not compelled.

But Fromm also speaks of freedom in terms of fulfillment and not alone of independence. Here perhaps Fromm implies one of

¹Fromm, EFF, p. 105.

²Fromm, MFH, p. 247.

³Fromm, EFF, p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

his familiar distinctions between the pseudo and real although he does not say this specifically of independence. In any event, there is a form of independence which he distrusts. For in modern society man becomes "more independent, self-reliant, and critical;" yet at the same time he becomes "more isolated, alone and afraid."¹ Indeed, we need to take care that the idea of freedom does not itself connote an inevitable tie-up with isolation, alienation or fear. Fromm believes that "the process of growing freedom does not constitute a vicious circle, and that man can be free and yet not alone, critical and yet not filled with doubts, independent and yet an integral part of mankind."² In fact, "If human freedom is established as freedom to, if man can realize his self fully and uncompromisingly, the fundamental cause for his asocial drives will have disappeared and only a sick and abnormal individual will be dangerous."³

Freedom in the positive sense, Fromm writes, "consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality." And the concept of spontaneity as used here is, he writes, merely expanded in the concept of productiveness.⁵ This means that the negative condition for productiveness is the absence of compulsion, from without or within; for "Spontaneous activity is not compulsive activity, to which the individual is driven by his isolation and powerlessness; it is not the activity of the automaton, which is the uncritical adoption of patterns suggested from the outside."⁶

¹ Ibid., p. 104.

² Ibid., p. 257.

³ Ibid., p. 269.

⁴ Ibid., p. 258.

⁵ Fromm, MFH, p. 84.

⁶ Fromm, EFF, p. 258.

The statement of the criterion of moral growth to which Fromm returns most often is productiveness. "Productiveness is man's ability to use his powers and to realize the potentialities inherent in him."¹ Productiveness is, therefore, the spontaneous, uncoerced from without or within, creative attitude and activity of man. Its presence and its expression are basic to man's nature as man. ". . . the wish to make productive use of his powers is inherent in man, and his efforts consist mainly in removing the obstacles in himself and in his environment which block him from following his inclination."² In the last analysis, freedom, happiness and strength come about only through productiveness.³

This emphasis on productiveness indirectly confirms my view that sloth is to be understood as one of the basic sins or forms of sin, and is not peripheral. For if man is productive by nature," this "contradicts the idea that man is lazy by nature and that he has to be forced to be active."⁴ There is a great similarity, Fromm notes, between laziness and compulsive activity between not being productive and driving blindly as if mere activity equalled productiveness. "Laziness and compulsive activity are not opposites but are two symptoms of the disturbance of man's proper functioning."⁵

¹Fromm, MFH, p. 84. The exposition of Fromm's concept of productiveness should make it clear that, despite the superficial resemblance of the idea to Marx, there is actually a much closer relationship of Fromm's productiveness to existentialist thought in persons like Berdyaev.

²Ibid., p. 230.

³Ibid., p. 149.

⁴Ibid., p. 106.

⁵Ibid., p. 106.

Productiveness is not brought about by either repression or indulgence. Both of these divert a person from use of his productive powers, so that "the real ethical alternative is not between them but between repression-indulgence on the one hand and productiveness on the other."¹ The opposite of productiveness is a "realism" which sees only the surface of things, or an insanity in which one perceives reality only as a symbol.² "The normal human being is capable of relating himself to the world simultaneously by perceiving it as it is and by conceiving it enlivened and enriched by his own powers."³ Man has a "reproductive power," i.e., a capacity to produce again what has been produced before, and a generative or creative power, to enrich it by his own powers. Both these powers are necessarily involved in productiveness. The two "are opposite poles whose interaction is the dynamic source of productiveness."⁴ The generative capacity which should enter into productiveness shows often a "relative atrophy in our culture."⁵

What is the content upon which productiveness works? It is in the definition of this that Fromm thinks differently from some other psychologists who have emphasized creativity, like Otto Rank. To Fromm, "by far the most important object of productiveness is man himself."⁶ Since basic attitudes toward the self

¹Ibid., p. 229. ²Ibid., p. 90. ³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. It may be noted that this insight would provide an effective fulcrum for criticizing existentialism as a total philosophy.

⁵Ibid., p. 89. ⁶Ibid., p. 91.

and toward other people are conjunctive or concomitant, a productive attitude toward the self involves a productive attitude toward other people, and in that context appears as productive love.

Intrapsychic and interpersonal relations are both the chief foci for productiveness and the touchstone for whether activity in relation to any content is actually productive in character.

Since man is as he is, productiveness must include productive thinking, which is not merely the exercise of "intelligence," the tool for attaining practical goals, but also of "reason," being "concerned with the essence of things . . . with the generic and the universal."¹ Thinking which is limited to the former and excludes the latter is not truly productive. There is enough objectivity in productive thinking to prevent it from becoming victim to wish-fulfillment; this means respect, rather than detachment, and therefore includes concern for the object of thought. The objective element in productive thinking includes seeing oneself in this same way, not merely other people and objects.

So there is an emotional aspect of productiveness, an intellectual one, a sexual one, and so on to all the forms of classifying human relationships and activities. But all forms in which productiveness appears have in common the fact that they are products of "abundance" not of scarcity.³ The ability to love other people productively comes about because one does not have to hoard love for himself; secure in a proper self-love, he need not think of love in terms of quantity and can love others. So

¹Ibid., p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 103.

³Ibid., p. 189.

the exercise of intellectual forms of productiveness rests on abundance; one creates because he feels creative, i.e., feels a confidence which rests on something other than mere comparison with the work of others. One who has not developed, or been helped to develop in his rearing, productive capacity in its various forms (to love, to think, to observe and realign, etc.) is a victim of scarcity. But if he has developed these powers, or has been helped to develop them, it means ipso facto that he moves from "abundance." So security rests on freedom, and freedom on security. Productiveness is both in operation. The importance of this fact historically as well as psychologically may be seen, Fromm believes, in that there was no surplus energy for instinctively human achievements beyond mere survival until some abundance," economic and otherwise, was attained.¹

Because the word productiveness is so often associated merely with the production of goods, or at least of economic productivity, it is important to give Fromm's warning that work for work's sake is one of the vices, not virtues, of modern western man. This is the "innerweltliche Askese" thesis to which he gives assent. His psychological explanation is that such work and productivity are compulsive, not free, activity; and since they stem from neither freedom nor security, they can not be considered genuinely productive.

Productiveness is therefore, if properly understood, the main criterion of moral growth and realization. We are truly moral

¹Ibid., p. 187.

to the extent that we are productive. If we are truly productive, then we are also, by definition, truly free, truly happy, truly integrated, and truly moral. But man's productiveness, freedom, happiness, and so on are not qualities or capacities to which some men attain completely and others not at all. They are but imperfectly achieved by any one. "Man always dies before he is fully born."¹ From quotes the last words of Faust:

He only earns his freedom and existence,
Who daily conquers them anew.²

Running throughout Fromm's discussion of the criteria of moral growth and realization is this note: moral feeling and moral action are un-compelled from without or from within. If un-compulsive, then the natural expression of man is productiveness, and as a consequence man is free, strong, one, and moral.

Where do ideals stand in this picture of the criteria of moral growth? What we need to distinguish, Fromm writes, is between "genuine and fictitious ideals."³ "All genuine ideals have one thing in common: they express the desire for something which is not yet accomplished but which is desirable for the purpose of the growth and happiness of the individual."⁴ Thus the "ideals" of Nazism, for instance, are unmasked as ideals because the Nazis were actually opportunists, and also because what they strove for was more submission, masochism, escape from the freedom which man must reach if he is to be what he potentially is. The fact that

¹ Ibid., p. 91.

² Ibid., p. 93. Trans. Bayard Taylor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899).

³ Fromm, EFF, p. 266.

⁴ Ibid.